



Connection through reflection

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Summary

The Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement (CSLCE) at Michigan State University (MSU) has worked to understand the impact service-learning has on several learning outcomes, including gaining insight into course concepts and understanding social issues. In this study, a subset of students participating in service-learning as an alternative assignment in Integrative Studies in Social Science—a large, lecture-based class that does not include discussion of the service-learning experiences undertaken by the students who elect to participate—was offered the chance to participate in reflection circles facilitated by a group called the Community Club. These women are either spouses of or are themselves retired MSU faculty/staff, which adds an intergenerational mentorship component. These reflection

circles allow a small group of students (no more than 12 per group) to process their service-learning with peers at three specific times in the semester.

Students were asked to fill out a pre-circle survey before the start of the first session and a post survey at the end of the last session. The survey questions correlate to specific learning objectives associated with service-learning. Several of these questions were presented in the general end-of-the-semester survey given to all students engaged in service.

Both sets of data show a positive increase related to these key learning objectives. We were interested in seeing how the two relate to each other and believe that the small group peer-to-peer method shows greater development in the knowledge and understanding of social issues and the relation of the service to course or academic major.

This poster will show the benefits of this facilitated small group, peer-to-peer reflection process on the impacts of the learning objectives specified. This is a process that MSU as a large research university has been able to conduct and one that could be utilized by smaller institutions as well.

References

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